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Welcome

Welcome to the thirteenth "Black Friday" issue of our Occupy Sydney Zine!

Special free school this Saturday by Glenn Lockitch regarding your recording rights.

Lizards Revenge begins 14 July, Much love to everyone working to expose the danger of Olympic Dam open cut uranium mine (see Issue 7)

This is *your* platform to share & show what Occupy Sydney means to you. The submissions in this zine are the opinions of individual Occupiers. All copy rights & ownership remain with these individuals.

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Please feel welcome to contribute & add *your* voice & views.

It is only when we share in the commons do we bond as a community, so let us all share in the commons of the people's media & discover what we can create together.

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A big thank you to Marc, Hugo, Wenny, Allan, Liam & Maloë for your articles, report backs, websites, photos and images. I am so very grateful to work on this project with your talents!

Much Love & Support xx Bern

Your Submissions & Feedback

Please put "Submission", "Feedback" or "Subscription" in the subject heading & submit your contributions by Wednesdays to OccupySydneyZine@gmail.com

so it can be ready for printing by Occupy Fridays

Language, Jargon Pantomimes, and Questions of Real Rigour

Marc Ahrens

"Investors welcome Spain rescue", read the title of an article by Gareth Hutchens in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.[1] It gave me pause for thought. Firstly it connoted just how precarious our economy is that it fears a growth in Chinese retailing of 'just' 13.8%. Yet there was another interesting aspect to the article. It had one of those large-font quotes that stands out amid the body of the text that says "It will enable Spain... to have some liquidity in its financial system.", attributed to "David Liu, an analyst". I'm no expert on finance, but to me this just means "Spain is getting cash". Given that this is the point of the article, as conveyed by the title, David Liu's input is entirely superfluous; it's a tautology.

For one thing, I wouldn't be very impressed with an "analyst" who merely states the bleeding obvious. More generally, it's a reminder that what passes for expertise in the finance sector might be a lot of stating of the bleeding obvious, albeit couched in industry jargon.

More generally still, it's a reminder that this might be the tendency of people calling themselves "experts" in all sorts of industries. It highlights the need to apply critical thinking when confronted with jargon, for so much "expertise", in my experience, is about little more than phrasing some given circumstance in industry jargon and then acting as though this is an *explanation* of the circumstance; of course, it is not. I observed this many times in a hospital stay a few years ago. For example,

> – "Look, my leg is swollen."
> – "Yes.... hmmm.... [It's very important to make the 'hmmm' noise – it connotes deep thought.] It looks like oedema."
> – "What does that mean?! What's wrong!?"
> – "Well.... errrr.... It's kind of a build up of fluid."
> – "A 'bulid up of fluid'? You mean 'swelling', don't you?"
> – "Yes."
> – "I've just told you my leg is swollen, and you went 'hmmmmm', only to tell me your verdict: my leg is swollen. How long did you have to study for you degree again?"

OK, evidently I wasn't the nicest patient. But – and you might say I'm biased – I don't think hard sciences have this problem, like physics and chemistry. There, jargon exists to clarify meaning, not to obfuscate it. If physicists use jargon, they do so because no appropriate word previously existed for the concept; the concept was discovered through the work of physicists. If anything, physics uses *too little* jargon, using words in very precise ways that have much broader general use, such as "energy", which tends to lead to confusion between physicists and lay people. But physicists certainly don't use words like "anterior" and "posterior": "front" and "back" will do just fine, thank you.

Not only is industry-speak supposed to connote authority and expertise, it possibly is also supposed to convince the speaker and his industry colleagues that, "Yes, this is a real area of expertise. We have special words and everything". The fads of absurd language in the finance industry attest to this: think of the phrase "Dead cat bounce" that was going around a year or so ago, or "Kicking the can down the street" that is the latest finance cliché. These are

1 G Hutchens , "Investors welcome Spain rescue", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2012-06-11.

gratuitously cryptic ways of conveying simple concepts. "Dead cat bounce" referred to the possibility that an apparent recovery from the GFC might be but brief, and "Kicking the can down the street" seems to be fashionable lingo for suggesting that current economic solutions, especially in Europe, are just temporarily avoiding calamity by continuing to invest in its root cause. (Australia's continued investment in a property bubble, by which it has thus far avoided the GFC that hit everywhere else, might be described this way.[2]) This "can-kicking" phrase is very popular now, including among financial sceptics. The great problem with such language is that it creates a false sense of security. It's potentially a confidence trick, though not necessarily one in which the speaker is aware of the limitations of his own expertise. Sure, it projects to people outside the industry that "This is a formidable discipline, replete with jargon", but more dangerous is the possibility that it creates a false sense of security within the industry itself, so that it becomes dangerously overconfident of its own expertise.

It's very clear that by 2012 we can say this of the finance and economics industries.

One thing that sticks out of the finance news like a sore thumb is the amount of anthropomorphising of The Market that takes place. "Anthropomorphising" is the process of treating an inanimate thing as though it were a person. In almost any financial news bulletin in the mainstream press, one will hear terms like "The Market feels X", "The Market is jittery", "The Market fears Y", "The Market is responding to Z". This is complete nonsense. At a basic level, it's wrong: The Market (maybe we should call it "Marty" for short) obviously doesn't feel anything. More importantly, though, it is the language of herd behaviour, rather than of rational, investment decision-making.

Even more irrational is the relentless abductive reasoning that is perpetuated by financial experts alongside this anthropomorphising: "The Market did X *because* of Y". This is textbook fallacious reasoning, taking a correlation and asserting a causal relationship without evidence. Worse, it is "abductive" reasoning insofar as it usually picks one cause, without basis, from one of many, many possible causes. This is fallacious reasoning of the worst kind. The difference between a mere journalist and a financial expert seems to be the purported "expertise" in divining the causes of market events, invariably without evidence. In the absence of any evidence for causal claims, the real difference between the journalist and the financial "expert" is the latter's willingness to make more precise but commensurately more unfounded claims, couched in jargon that is supposed to make up for a lack of evidence – wittingly or otherwise, on the part of the expert. Such regular claims of experts, applying insufficient critical thinking to their work, are potentially little more than jargon used as a confidence trick, and amounts to the expert conning not just the media consuming public, but the expert himself. The fact that, for all the financial and economic expertise in the world, we still appear to be doing little more than riding economic bubbles, attests to this self-deluding confidence trick interpretation of these dynamics.

There is a result from experimental psychology called the Dunning-Kruger Effect (DKE)[3]. The DKE explains a source of cognitive bias, one of many that experimental psychology concerns itself with, and it is the bias that one has in one's own favour arising from one's lack of knowledge. This is a formalisation of the old saying, “The more I learn, the less I know”.

2 Eg see S Keen, “Why the Debt to GDP Radio Matters”, http://www.incrediblecharts.com/economy/keen_debt_gdp.php

3 Dunning, Kruger, "Unskilled and Unaware of it". Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 77 (6): 1121–34 http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.64.2655&rep=rep1&type=pdf . See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunning%E2%80%93Kruger_effect

The DKE captures the idea that, in a field of expertise, those who know the least are least equipped to accurately judge their own expertise, and are thus the most likely to overestimate their ability. At least in the field of expertise that Dunning & Kruger's experiment used, formal logic, they showed that the least competent three quarters of the group overestimated both their ability and rank, while the most adept quarter assessed their ability quite accurately, though they underestimated their rank – they didn't realise how incompetent the average person was compared to themselves. The DKE result suggests most people overestimate their ability for a lack of understanding; poor *self-insight* in a field of expertise follows from a poor understanding of it.

Now, it's worth trying to extend the DKE to whole disciplines. The question is, just as with the DKE spectrum of self-insight that *individuals* exhibit in a particular field, does the self-insight of different *sciences* vary across a spectrum also due to a lack of self-insight? It stands to reason that it does. Firstly, surely not all sciences are created equal, as Karl Popper spent some time pointing out. Doubtless I will be accused of bias here, but physics is the *definitive* science; as Ernest Rutherford said, “All science is either physics or stamp collecting”. If tomorrow morning, someone put forward a compelling argument for why physics is not a science but rather a “foobar” (whatever that means), then management scientists would be calling themselves “management foobars” by the time they'd finished their three hour lunch. The spectrum definitely exists, but how much awareness is there among lesser sciences of their own lesser rigour?

Again, it stands to reason there is not much. There is scarcely a practitioner of any discipline calling itself a “science” that does not believe his field exemplifies a scientific “gold standard”, and those who don't are generally few and resented as iconoclasts within their fields. “Gold standard” itself is a popular phrase used to characterise the double-blind drug-placebo trial design. It is the goldenness of this “gold standard” that is supposed to support the outcomes of such a trials, yet it now looks that it has been *manipulated* by drug companies to establish the efficacy of their antidepressants[4]. As per this “gold standard”, drugs with side-effects were compared against sugar pills with none, an arrangement that probably meant those experiments were never double-blind in the first place.[5] This kind of lack of self-awareness regarding a discipline's rigour could be expected to arise because so infrequently do people move between disparate scientific fields. Practitioners of lesser sciences are trained in a field in such a way that their working *definition* of “science” comes from the experience of their own field; it is propagated from teacher to student. It is only in the unlikely event that they move from their lesser science to a more rigorous one that they will start to get a sense that sciences lie on a spectrum, and that their original expertise was not so rigorous after all. Sciences do lie on a spectrum, and the self-insight of their own rigour probably varies along with it, just as individuals lie on a spectrum of self-insight of their own expertise.

Steve Keen has described a culture of absent self-insight – “the partially sighted leading the partially sighted”[6] – as being propagated in economics education, one of his great concerns. Unlike other mathematical sciences which send their students to their campus' School of Maths, “most economists learn their mathematics by attending courses … given by other

4 I Kirsch, *The Emperor's New Drugs*, Basic Books, 2010

5 Such doubts could be answered directly with improved – more golden – standards, but conspicuously those trial designs are never used.

6 S Keen, *Debunking Economics (2nd ed)* , 2011, Zen Books, Ch. 2, “No more Mr Nice Guy/Educated in to Ignorance”

economists”[6]. As a result, errors exist in basic economics that have been propagated from one generation of economists tot he next, so that they effectively have their own working definition of mathematics. To be sure, it looks like maths, and mostly is, but occasionally it diverts from mathematical rigour. To wit, Keen has noted a spurious mathematics in neoclassicism's foundation. The intersection of the demand and supply curves, “the equilibrium point”, is supposed to be the price at which goods should be sold at to maximise profit. Because of laissez faire capitalism's definition of price, this point is also supposed to maximise the benefit to society. This is neoclassical economics' *fundamental moral justification*. It is, supposedly, supported by a mathematical proof requiring only first year calculus (for any other science, anyway), but following the proof in full detail leads to a contradiction, meaning that not all of neoclassicism's requisite assumptions can logically hold. Thus, we have an example of an interdisciplinary Dunning Kruger Effect among sciences lying on a spectrum of mathematical rigour, with economics demonstrably erroneous at its most basic level, and erroneous in a way that undermines its moral *raison d'etre*[7]. Yet, mainstream economics remains sufficiently ignorant of how and why this is the case, so that it takes a renegade economist like Keen to proselytise basic truth.

Unfortunately, there is an inbuilt limitation to the Dunning-Kruger Effect's practicality in any given instance: just as two parties might disagree on a statement of fact, with one of them wrong and the other right such as is possible in formal logic, for exactly the same reason they might also disagree on which of them is falling in to the DKE trap. Through a kind of irony, invoking the DKE does not progress the dispute. In the same way, two different experts might disagree on the disparity of rigour between their respective fields because the one from the less rigorous field does not comprehend *how* much less rigorous his field is, and he cannot comprehend *why* this is so precisely *because* he's known no other field.

Such an interdisciplinary disagreement famously arose when physicist Alan Sokal submitted a spoof paper to a postmodern journal, *Social Text*.[8] Among the many criticisms that the likes of Sokal have of postmodern academia is that it is, they say, “obscurantist” – deliberately obscure in its language rather than earnestly enlightening. After having his wilfully nonsensical but sufficiently obscure paper published, Sokal then published another one elsewhere, revealing the spoof and what its success implied. In defence against Sokal's “obscurantism” accusations, some postmodernists insisted they weren't being obscure, it's just that Sokal was not sufficiently educated in their expertise to understand their expert writing. One thing Sokal had in his favour, though, was the propensity his postmodern opponents had developed for writing uninformed extrapolations of scientific topics. By sticking only to such postmodern publications, Sokal was able to critique them as a physicist. This he did with Jean Bricmont in *Intellectual Impostures*[9]. A sample of this book is offered by Richard Dawkins' review of it in *Nature*[10]. Of Lacan's[11] use of mathematics, for example, Sokal & Bricmont say:

> *he uses quite a few key words from the mathematical theory of compactness, he mixes them up arbitrarily and without the slightest regard for their meaning. His ‘definition’*

7 For details of this argument, see *Debunking Economics (2nd ed)*, 2011, Zen Books, Ch 4, “Size Does Matter”, or see S Keen, R Standish, “Debunking the Theory of the Firm – a Chronology”, *Real World Economics Review*, No. 53, available here: http://www.paecon.net/PAEReview/issue53/KeenStandish53.pdf . Or perhaps I will do a presentation of the argument in a later zine.

8 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sokal_affair

9 A Sokal, J Bricmont, *Intellectual Impostures*, Profile Books, 1998

10 R Dawkins, “Postmodernism Disrobed”, *Nature* 394, pp 141-143, 1998 – http://richarddawkins.net/articles/824-postmodernism-disrobed

11 Yes Zizek fans, the Lacan who influenced Slavoj.

> *of compactness is not just false: it is gibberish.*

For instance, Lacan has said of the erect male member, that it

> *is equivalent to the sqrt(-1) of the signification produced above, of the jouissance that it restores by the coefficient of its statement to the function of lack of signifier (-1).*

Well... err... obviously. A mathematician would probably make no sense of this, though.[12] Was Lacan being deliberately misleading, or was he unaware of the fact that his exposition of mathematical compactness was gibberish?

Such disputes, with each side accusing the other of just not comprehending the opposing argument, might represent a situation in which there is no right or wrong answer, or where both parties are right, or indeed where both a wrong. But it might also represent a case described by the Dunning-Kruger Effect: both parties are arguing, one is right and the other is wrong, and for the very same reason that the wrong party is wrong – lack of knowledge – he also cannot see his error.

How can someone become so assured of expertise that he hasn't got? If one were to take Alan Sokal's side in the above debate, one answer would be that people feel they're experts when they participate in the *accoutrements*, but not necessarily the essence, of expertise: becoming reliant on jargon to the point that it obscures rather than clarifies your work; uncritically referring to one's own practice in terms like “The Gold Standard”; being secluded from the experience of more rigorous expertise, even *denying oneself* exposure it (this is commonly done with the excuse “I don't have the time” – You don't have the time as a professional to be correct!?); deploying a smattering of ill-conceived mathematics; having disparate, disjointed havens of expertise populated by fat, naked emperors who share a culture of mutual apparel appreciation[13].

Of course, it cannot be overlooked that what is written in this paper might itself be the product of some bias, a self-delusion of expertise. The same is true of the Dunning-Kruger Effect *per se*. Perhaps the only permanent solution is to accept an endless burden of critical thinking – there really are no shortcuts, if we are to avoid being duped by others. More importantly, it is a responsibility that ought to be employed so that we don't dupe ourselves, and thereby mislead others.

When it comes to finance, things like the jargon pantomime which creates a false sense of expertise of an industry to outsiders is worrying; when it creates a false sense of security within it, and when that industry has so much potential impact on everyone else, we should all be terrified.

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12 Against Sokal's presentation of the problem, scandals have erupted from time-to-time in physics, such as Pons' & Fleischmann's famous “Cold Fusion” confusion (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_fusion), Schön's outright fraud (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sch%C3%B6n_scandal) from which he published one paper every eight days in 2001, and the “reverse Sokal affair”: the “Bogdanov Affair” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bogdanov_Affair). This latter scandal was two brothers' deliberate attempt to obfuscate their way to physics and maths PhDs. While all these cases reveal problems with the peer-review system, it must be said that they were all eventually caught out by their own peers. In the case of the experimentalists Pons, Fleischmann, and Schön, their errors or frauds were revealed when no-one else could replicated their claims. You can't con nature. In the case of the Bogdanov theorists, until theory concurs with observation, theories are only theories, and it behoves the rest of us to bear that in mind.

Aside: I actually knew some physicists who obtained a grant to pursue Schön's work which once seemed like a goldmine; the basis for the funding was revealed as a fraud, but they kept the grant.

13 On this latter point, the culture of mutual congratulation, Alex Pareene depicted the TED Talk subculture as little more than this in the *Salon* article, “Don't mention income inequality please, we're entrepreneurs: ” (2012-05-21).

Appendix: Keen's problem with the mathematics of competition[1]

Consider a firm producing in a marketplace, the ith among many. Neoclassical economics requires for its claims here "Perfect Competition", namely that (1) there are many firms so that none of have a large market share, lest their production quantity influence the market price, and (2) firms produce identical products ("commodities"), so consumers have no reason not to follow the cheapest price[2].

Under such conditions, there will be a market-wide price, P.

The ith firm will have a profit π_i which depends on the quantity produced and sold by the firm (q_i), the market price, and the cost of manufacturing q_i items, C_i, which is particular to the processes of firm i.

By definition, profit for firm i is the revenue $P \times q_i$ minus the cost of production C_i:

$$\pi_i(q_i) \equiv Pq_i - C_i$$

As per high school maths, the quantity q_i that maximizes profit $\pi_i(q_i)$ is the one that makes its derivative with respect to q_i zero.

$$0 = \pi_i\prime(q_i) = \frac{d(Pq_i)}{dq_i} - C_i\prime(q_i) \quad (1)$$

Now, at this point neoclassical economists use the "Perfect Competition" conditions to assert that P is independent of q_i – the ith firm is too small to influence the market with its quantity q_i, so that $\frac{d(Pq_i)}{dq_i} = P\frac{dq_i}{dq_i} = P$. This gives them the result that profits are maximised when

$$0 = \pi_i\prime(q_i) \stackrel{?}{=} P - C_i\prime(q_i) \quad \text{(Standard result – contestded by Keen)} \quad (2)$$

In other words, Profits are maximum when the $C_i\prime(q_i)$, the "marginal cost", equals the price. This is the "optimum output rule" for a firm in perfect competition[3].

Instead of settling there, let's continue expanding the mathematics from equation (1).

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= P\frac{dq_i}{dq_i} + q_i\frac{dP}{dq_i} - C_i\prime(q_i) \quad \text{(Product rule)} \\ &= P + q_i\frac{dP}{dq_i} - C_i\prime(q_i) \end{aligned}$$

Compare this with equation (2) and note that the two are the same exactly when $q_i\frac{dP}{dq_i} = 0$. Again, neoclassical economists evoke perfect competition to assert this as true in order to get their standard result, since P is independent of q_i if no firm has an influential market share, meaning $\frac{dP}{dq_i}$, and hence the whole term, is zero. But let's continue expanding the maths...

$$0 = P + q_i\frac{dP}{dQ}\frac{dQ}{dq_i} - C_i\prime(q_i) \quad \text{(Chain rule)}$$

[1] S Keen and R Standish. "Debunking the theory of the firm". In: *Real World Economics Review, Iss. 53* (2010). URL: `http://www.paecon.net/PAEReview/issue53/KeenStandish53.pdf`.

[2] Paul Krugman, Robin Wells, and Kathryn Graddy. *Essentials of Economics*. 2nd. Worth Publishers, NY, 2010.

[3] Ibid.

where Q is the total output of the commodity in question of all firms, ie $Q = \sum_j q_j$. Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= P + q_i \tfrac{dP}{dQ} \tfrac{d\left(\sum_j q_j\right)}{dq_i} - C_i\prime(q_i) && \text{(Def of Q)} \\ &= P + q_i \tfrac{dP}{dQ} \left(\textstyle\sum_j \tfrac{dq_j}{dq_i}\right) - C_i\prime(q_i) \\ &= P + q_i \tfrac{dP}{dQ} \left(\textstyle\sum_j \delta_{i,j}\right) - C_i\prime(q_i) && \text{(Def of Kronekcer Delta)} \\ &= P + q_i \tfrac{dP}{dQ} - C_i\prime(q_i) && (\delta_{i,j} = 1 \text{ when } i = j \text{ and } 0 \text{ otherwise}) \end{aligned}$$

The last equation above is mathematically equivalent to the equation whose zeros give the maximum of the very first one (ie to eq. (1)). Comparing again with eq. (2) suggests that, if the two are to be equivalent — if the standard result stated for a competitive firm is to be derivable from the above equation, which is equivalent to eq. (1) — then it requires that $q_i \frac{dP}{dQ} = 0$. Now, it cannot be that q_i is naught: manufacturers must manufacturer something. Thus, the only way the standard result can be true is if $\frac{dP}{dQ} = 0$.

And here we arrive at a contradiction, for $\frac{dP}{dQ}$ is the slope of the demand curve for the whole market place, and another central tenet of neoclassical economics is that this must always be negative, that is, always downward sloping. It cannot be zero. For neoclassicists, $\frac{dP}{dq_i}$ can certainly be zero — indeed, they insist it is, as a result of perfect competition, but not $\frac{dP}{dQ}$. What the derivation above has demonstrated is that these two expressions are mathematically equivalent. It is a failure of the mathematics of neoclassical economists insight they have different values.

In different arguments elsewhere[4], Keen relays other reasons for the failure of the "Optimum Output Rule", which was first demonstrated by William Gorman in 1953[5] who completely failed to recognise what he had proven, and was then rediscovered and publicised in the 70s as the Sonnenschein-Mantel-Debreu Theorem[6][7]. SMD says that the demand curve for a whole marketplace cannot be downward sloping at all points except when there is only one consumer and one commodity; the market-wide demand curve can't mathematically exist as traditionally conceived. But even the worrisome SMD result is compatible with a market-wide demand curve that is *mostly* downward sloping; the above derivation suggests that, for neoclassical economists' "Optimum Output Rule" in perfect competition, the market-wide demand curve must be *never* downward sloping, nor indeed ever upward sloping.

The failure of the "Optimum Output Rule" presents a moral problem for economics, for whom price is related to *"utility"* — the benefit derived from a good. Jeremy Bentham founded economics with his work on utilitarianism, the ethical principle that the most ethical course is one that maximises benefit ("utility") across society — "The greatest good for the greatest number". This hinges on a measure of "utility". Bentham decided that a suitable measure of the utility of a product is *what people are willing to pay for it*; when people spend money on an item, they affirm their belief that the item is worth at least that much. Thus, the promise of the "Optimum Output Rule" is that it doesn't merely maximise profits, but that it maximises the benefit to society. With that rule gone, so is the moral justification for the basis of laissez faire capitalism.

[4]Steve Keen. *Debunking Economics,* 2nd. London: Zen Books, 2010.

[5]W M Gorman. "Community preference fields". In: *Econometrica* (1953).

[6]Wikipedia. *The Sonnenschein-Mantel-Debreu Theorem.* URL: `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sonnenschein%E2%80%93Mantel%E2%80%93Debreu_theorem`.

[7]Frank Ackerman. "Still dead after all these years: interpreting the failure of general equilibrium theory". In: *Journal of Economic Methodology 9:2, 119–139* (2002). URL: `http://www.ase.tufts.edu/gdae/Pubs/rp/StillDead02.pdf`.

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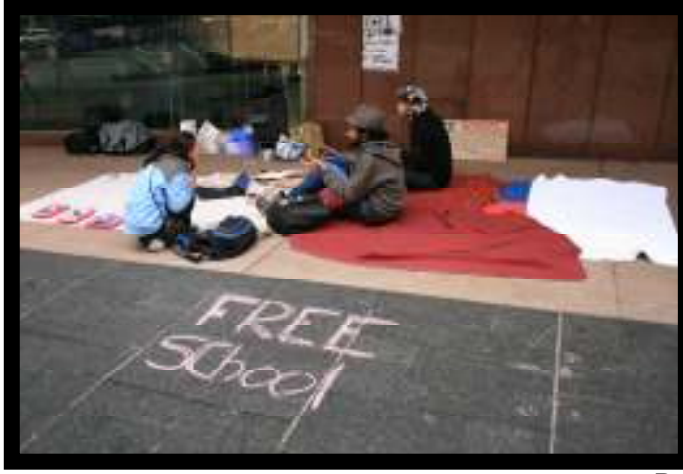
Occupy Sydney

FREE SCHOOL



Occupy Collage

All you need is a word, newspaper, cardboard, glue and fifteen minutes. Think about your word as you look through the newspaper, rip or cut out anything that relates to your word. Lay out your clippings on the cardboard and when you are happy with the arrangement, glue them down. Fabi used recycled house hold items to create a 3d effect.

Legals with Dale

Every Free School Dale has been giving a workshop to educate inform and relate legal matters regarding the Occupation. On Saturday, Dale talked about the legality of arrest in NSW. Going into detail about who can make an arrest and what restrictions are in place regarding arrests. He also had hand outs for people attending the Lizards Revenge event on 14th July.

Extreme Meditation

An amazing journey of sounds. Beginning with traditional instruments such as clap stick and temple bell, then expanding to include the natural city scape of cars, busses and construction with a slow heal to toe walk down Martin Place.

This exploration of the city street was a playful experience that suspended reality and became improvised street theatre. It dissolved the fabric of city life to become a captivating awe inspiring exploration now. Proving that we can cross into the meditative state in our everyday walking experience.

Submitted by Bern

Losing strength? An alternativ

Posted July 4, 2012, 10:15 a.m. EST by OccupyWallSt

http://occupywallst.org/article/losing-strength-alternative-vision-spains-indignad/

The following article was written by Marta Sánchez for Reflections on a Revolution about #15M, the Spanish social movement that helped give rise to #OWS.

A silent revolution emerges from the underground. Far from losing strength, decentralization has allowed 15-M to become ever more dynamic.

Is the 15-M movement going invisible? Or is it rather gaining strength in the 'underground'? The mainstream media keep claiming that the *indignados* have lost support since last year, that its only success is its ability to bring people together on special dates. Spanish newspaper *El País* concluded in May 2012 that, one year after the birth of the movement, popular support and sympathy for the *indignados* had decreased around 13% among the Spanish population, despite the massive mobilizations that took place from the 12th until the 15th of May, commemorating the anniversary of the movement. ABC opened its edition of May 15 stating that "the *indignados* movement shows less strength on their anniversary." But the media misses the point. In reality, rather than losing strength, the movement has become stronger, more organized, better coordinated, and supported by the commitment of hundreds of people.

The decentralization of the movement

When May 2011 came to an end, the recently born 15-M movement had to find out how to survive beyond the camp at Puerta del Sol (acampadasol). Thus arose the idea of decentralizing the movement towards the neighborhoods: the 'toma los barrios', or take the neighborhoods, initiative supported and encouraged the creation of assemblies in every neighborhood of Madrid. In this way, the movement went local: since the creation of the neighborhood assemblies on May 28, 2011, around 120 assemblies have been set up, and they coordinate through the Asamblea Popular de Madrid, the popular assembly of Madrid, also known as *Asamblea Interbarrios* (the inter-neighborhood assembly). As there were many thematic working groups in the original Sol camp, working groups with similar interests were created in most of the neighborhood assemblies, which since then collaborate and coordinate with the general groups from acampadasol.

The objectives of such decentralization aimed, in the first place, to promote direct and participatory democracy in the local sphere, based on an understanding of politics as the art of collectively creating an alternative pattern of social relations, thereby bringing people out of isolation and into a community. A second objective aimed to retake the public sphere, as defined by Habermas, as a place in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk, the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an arena of discursive interaction. This interaction is structured through assemblies, which constitute the greatest expression of horizontal organization and democracy from below. The combination of both objectives shows the movement's efforts in fighting for a 'real democracy now' (*Democracia Real Ya*), which goes in the direction of Daniel Barber's concept of 'strong democracy', a "normative alternative where citizens are engaged at the local and

national levels in a variety of political activities and regard discourse, debate and deliberation as essential conditions for reaching common ground."

The emergence of new social initiatives

The neighborhood assemblies usually meet once a week and they constitute public spaces for debate, where neighbors exchange ideas and visions about general topics (the economy, unemployment, housing, the financial system, education, social security), but also about local problems that particularly affect their neighborhood. A large number of activities have been organised within these assemblies, one of the most interesting of which is the creation of so-called 'time banks', or *bancos de tiempo*. Time banking is a pattern of non-monetary reciprocal service, which seeks to address requirements outside of the market sphere. As an alternative to the monetary system, the unit of currency used is one hour of any person's labor. In this way, time banks seek to provide incentives and rewards for work usually done on a volunteer basis. The assembly of the La Concepción neighborhood, in the northeast of Madrid, has one of the biggest and better organised *bancos de tiempo*, which is coordinated through the internet. The neighbors can create an online profile where they share information about the services they can provide, and they can get in touch with people who offer services they are interested in. They conclude the transaction between one another, and a mediation commission is planned in case any problem come up.

Other initiatives that originated within the assemblies include the creation of organic vegetable gardens in empty neighborhood spaces, aiming to reduce food dependency, and the constitution of co-operatives of agro-ecological consumption, which seek to shorten the commercialization circuits and establish closer relationships to producers. The latter is a very clear materialization of the movement's critique of the conventional models of production and consumption of the capitalist system, claiming that they are neither sustainable, fair, healthy, nor tasty. In this way, the assemblies are encouraging the emergence of alternative lifestyles and consumption habits.

One of the most successful actions of the 15-M movement that the neighborhoods have helped to coordinate is the 'stop forced evictions' campaign (*stop desahucios*). Around 200 evictions have been stopped since last year. Since the beginning, a working group on housing rights was constituted inside of the *indignados* movement, which formed the housing office (*oficina de vivienda*). When the neighborhood assemblies were created, they served as a means to channel the *desahucios* initiative. Only last year, 58.241 evictions were processed in the country, a rise of 22 percent compared to 2010. The Platform of Those Affected by a Mortgage (PAH: *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*), an association that was created in 2009 to try to find a solution to the drama of forced evictions, tightly connected to the 15-M movement, was able to provide its people-gathering strength and visibility to the stop evictions. The neighborhoods were a key actor in this process: they started collecting information of the evictions planned in their area, and organized the mobilization of activists on eviction dates. Through the celebration of mutual assemblies and the sharing of information through social networks, housing has become one of the main targets for the neighborhood assemblies to work on and mobilize around.

Under the slogan 'No human being is illegal', the Neighborhood Brigades for Human Rights Monitoring (*Brigadas Vecinales de Observación de los Derechos Humanos*) have been formed within some popular assemblies in Madrid, mostly in those neighborhoods with big immigrant collectives, with the goal of rendering visible the police raids on the immigrant population, as well as denouncing the xenophobic and racist bias that they usually display. The neighborhood assemblies, with their Human Rights Monitoring Brigades, have also been the cradle of protest against immigration detention centres (CIEs: *Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros*), advocating for their closure and the improvement of detainee's human rights guarantees.

The *indignados* have revitalized the neighborhood movement: new forms of cooperation coexist with the old neighborhood associations, and they are coordinating and sharing a large number of initiatives and joint actions. The neighborhood associations, which appeared in Madrid in the late sixties, had gradually moderated their demands and plunged into a light sleep. The 15-M movement has reawakened local politics and boosted community-based mobilization: we are witnessing how old and new forms of neighborhood organization are coexisting, coordinating and mutually learning from one another.

A new social climate

The media has emphasized lately that the 15-M movement still has a powerful people-gathering effect, but that, apart from the massive mobilizations, it is losing its influence in day-to-day life. But the 15-M movement has in fact created a new social climate. As the popular assembly of Algete expressed on its Twitter account, "we were sleeping, we woke up, and now we have chronic insomnia" (*dormíamos, despertamos, y ahora tenemos insomnio crónico*). Philosopher Amador Fernández-Savater goes beyond that and claims that the 15-M movement has opened a "new state of mind". The truth is that the 15-M movement has marked a turning point in Spain's social climate: it has opened up a whole new sphere of public debate. It has shown that it is possible to think differently, to feel differently, and to act differently. It has proved that it is possible to set up alternatives to the current system, and it has gathered together a large number of people who are now showing that there is more beyond the movement than only sporadic massive mobilizations.

In more than one hundred neighborhoods of Madrid, every single week, popular assemblies are held, working groups are created, and new initiatives are taking shape. Once a week, the Popular Assembly of Madrid (*Asamblea Popular de Madrid, or Comisión Interbarrios*), the inter-neighborhood coordination instance, meets to analyze, discuss and adopt proposals coming from the different neighborhood assemblies. A silent interconnection of minds takes place on a weekly basis all over the city, in the squares and on the internet. Yet the media keeps insisting that the movement is losing strength. We are witnessing the appearance of a parallel, alternative, underground economy. Yet those in power remain blind to it. As political scientist Carlos Taibo expresses it, "we constantly see how the media declares that the 15-M movement is dead. And I have realized that it is better not to reply back: the less they know about the reality of the movement, the more surprised they will be by what emerges from the invisible."

"The 15-M movement was an explosion in the streets, but it has spread seeds of work all over the neighborhoods," says Lola Díaz, from Ágora Sol. One year after its birth, we can conclude that the 15-M movement is more vibrant than ever before. It has raised a world awareness on the importance of being united for change. As activist and researcher Esther Vivas remarks, "with individual single actions we are not going to change the world, the change of paradigm will come only from collective action; if we don't fight, if we are not proactive, if we don't take the streets, we have lost before starting."

The 15-M movement has gone beyond protest: it has succeeded in altering the collective imagination and the political atmosphere at its very roots. It has generated a process of re-politicization of society. The agenda of actions has expanded and been radicalized: now we do not only occupy the squares, but we are taking back the public spaces in our own neighborhoods. We stop evictions. We crowd-fund our initiatives. We bring legal actions against bankers. We build our own parallel networks of social support. Does this show a weakened movement, running out of strength? Or does it rather show a dynamic movement, working in the underground on a silent revolution? The 15-M movement, armed with a 'slow impatience', as philosopher Daniel Bensaïd pointed out, is putting its efforts in rebuilding the correlation of forces between the 1 percent in power and the vast majority of society, the other 99 percent. And stay sharp: this is only just the beginning.

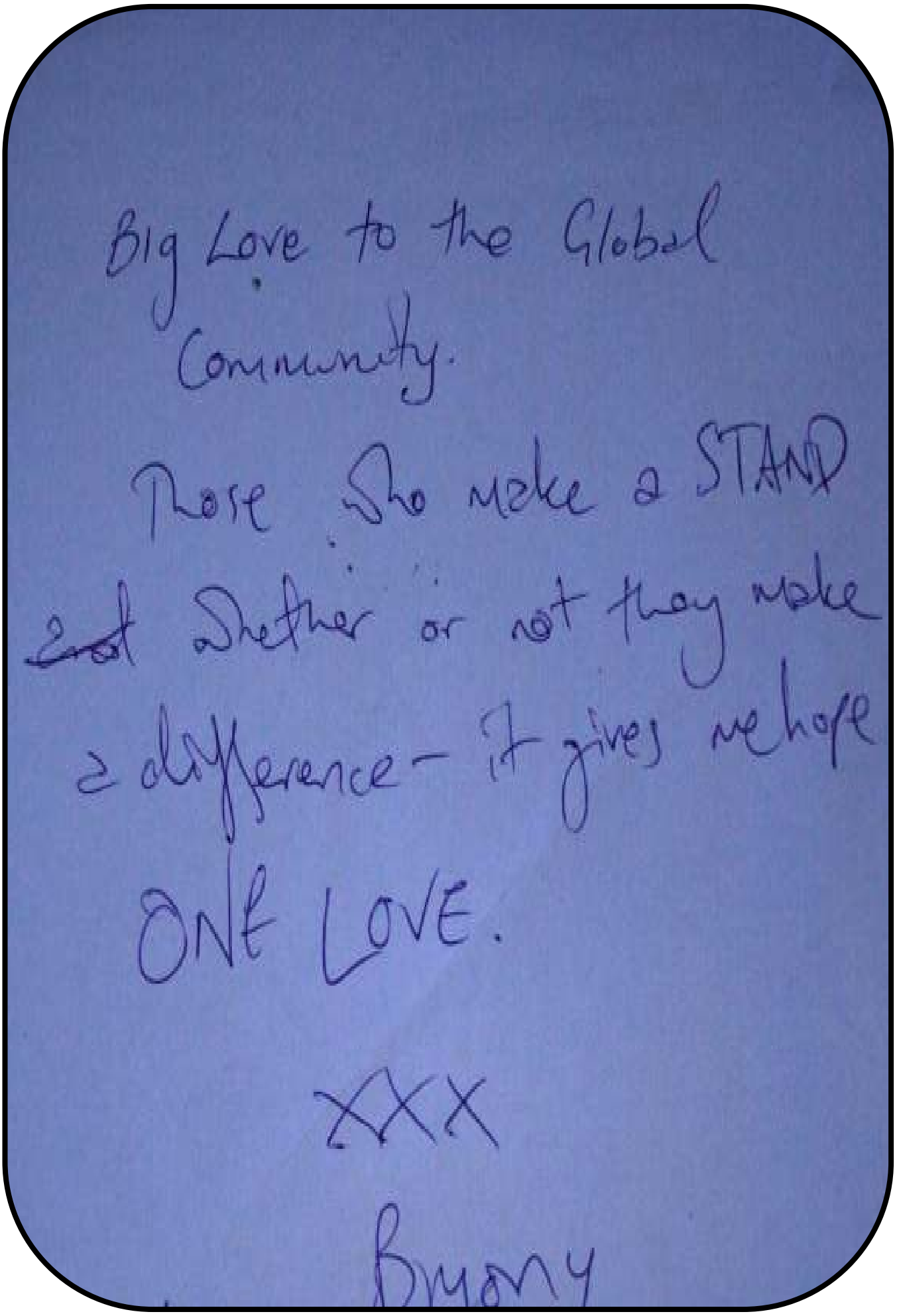

Big Love to the Global Community.
Rose Sho make a STAND
~~Coat~~ Shether or not they make
a difference - it gives me hope
ONE LOVE.
XXX
Bryony

Photo from messagesofsupport.tumblr.com by Bern Ellis

FREESCHOOL: Photography & Law July 14

Occupy Sydney

SPECIAL FREESCHOOL

Saturday 14 July 1pm

HOSTED By Glenn Lockitch

Starting at the Martin Place Occupation (cnr Martin Place and Elizabeth St .(About recording protests police & photography techniques)

Join our Occupy Sydney photographers citizen media peepz and those who want to stay in the loop as Glenn takes us through the rich tapestry of strategies and experiences of his broad experience as an Activist photographer (Sea Shepherd, FOE etc) , photo-journalist (numerous awards citations) , professional photography tutor http://spw.net.au/tutor/glenn-lockitch and involvement with the Australian Media and Arts Alliance to deliver the best advice and solutions available for professional or amateur photographers and citizens who are interested in knowing their rights to record officials (usually police).

Please join the event here to give the conveners a sense of how many people to cater for (note: non facebook people please consider the privacy implications BEFORE signing up and your possible decision not to will be respected-you will be welcome anyway.)

Light refreshments, nibbles will be served. (Occupy Sydney has a drug and alcohol free event space protocol and we do ask all attendees to respect this.)

Future Occupy the Court dates @ the Downing Centre

- **Thurs 19th July:** Lily's staying overnight hearing continued + next court date for the Federal Court case (@ the Federal Court)

- **Fri 27th July:** Next court date for the 19 people in the Group

The OCCUPY Content Management System (OCMS) @ occupytheuniverse.net

Learn

Education is a powerful tool for altering human belief systems and thus behaviour. It requires an organised system of information delivery and mechanisms whereby participation in the resultant evolving communities is facilitated. Comprehensive introduction to a variety of subjects is provided.

Occupy

In depth content covers the philosophy, structure, and activities of OCCUPY. For example, one significant role is, "the facilitation of community building through education".

Interact

OCCUPY facilitates the creation of new ways of doing things and new ways of being responsible for the wellbeing and sustainability of both local and global communities. This is not easily done in isolation, but rather, gathers strength through interaction with others. It is a process that empowers each participant through the discovery that similar concerns are shared world-wide throughout many different communities.

Discuss

Participation in learning and interaction develops community identity. Through discussion, proposals for action can be clarified and activities understood.

Collaborate

Identification of problems through participation in learning, interaction, and discussion, leads to the generation of proposals for solutions. Solutions take the form of consensus driven collaborations that can evolve into real-world actions.

Submitted by Allan

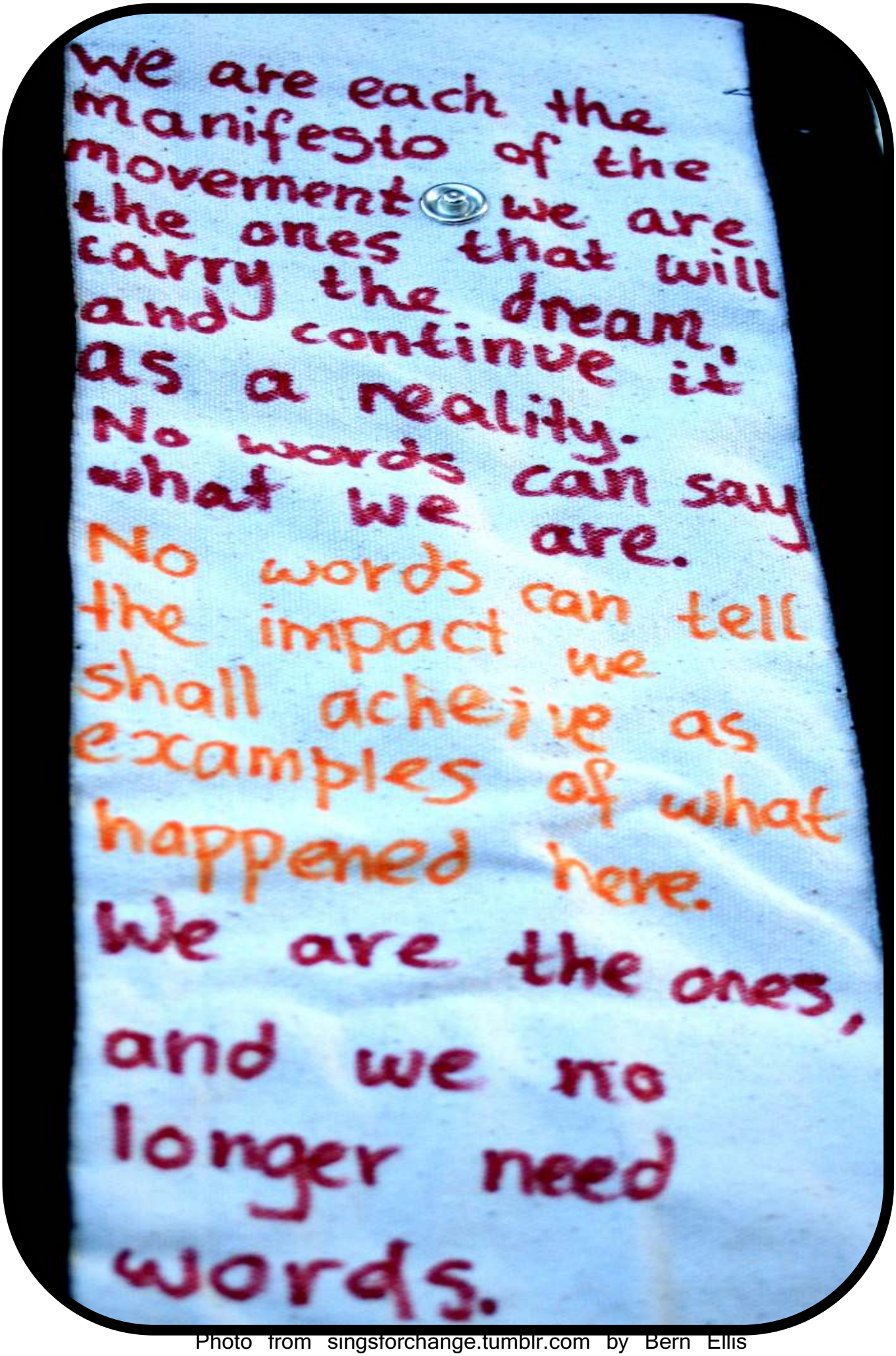

We are each the manifesto of the movement we are the ones that will carry the dream and continue it as a reality.
No words can say what we are.
No words can tell the impact we shall achieve as examples of what happened here.
We are the ones, and we no longer need words.

Photo from singsforchange.tumblr.com by Bern Ellis

Sacred Economics with Charles Eisenstein - A Short Film

http://youtu.be/EEZkQv25uEs

Directed by Ian MacKenzie http://ianmack.com
Produced by Velcrow Ripper, Gregg Hill, Ian MacKenzie

READ THE BOOK http://sacred-economics.com

HELP ADD SUBTITLES http://tinyurl.com/6qm37p9

Sacred Economics traces the history of money from ancient gift economies to modern capitalism, revealing how the money system has contributed to alienation, competition, and scarcity, destroyed community, and necessitated endless growth.

Today, these trends have reached their extreme - but in the wake of their collapse, we may find great opportunity to transition to a more connected, ecological, and sustainable way of being.

This short contains some visuals from the upcoming feature doc Occupy Love http://occupylove.org

FULL CREDITS

Directed & Edited by Ian MacKenzie
Producers: Ian MacKenzie, Velcrow Ripper, Gregg Hill
Cinematography: Velcrow Ripper, Ian MacKenzie
Animation: Adam Giangregorio, Brian Duffy
Music: Chris Zabriskie
Additional footage: Steven Simonetti, Pond 5, Youtube
Stills: Kris Krug, NASA
Special thanks: Charles Eisenstein, Stella Osorojos, Hart Traveller, Clara Roberts-Oss, Line 21 Media

Rally for Assange and Wikileaks

Sunday 15 July, Town Hall, 1pm

Julian Assange has sought diplomatic sanctuary and political asylum with Ecuador. Why? Because he has finally given up hope that the Australian government will defend himself and WikiLeaks from a relentless US-led campaign of intimidation, including:

a financial blockade of WikiLeaks instigated by the Obama administration, depriving them of 95% of the donations from supporters that represents their only income

a grand jury investigating WikiLeaks and Assange, described as ”unprecedented both in its scale and nature” by Australian diplomats in Washington

US State Department claims that Assange is not a journalist and therefore not entitled to First Amendment protections

the description of Assange as a terrorist by the US Vice-President.

A US prosecution of Assange would be an unprecedented attack on free speech: potentially criminalising all journalists who published leaked classified documents. Yet the Australian government has stated that it will not intervene to prevent the US extraditing Assange from either Sweden or the UK, and they have passed legislation to make an extradition from Australia easier.

Australian Greens Senator Scott Ludlam said in a letter to the Ambassador of Ecuador to the UK urging the Ecuadorian Goverment to consider Assange’s application for asylum favourably: “Mr Assange is in need of a government willing to stand up for his civil and political rights’.

As himself Assange observed in recent days, it is “fascinating to note that the government is at odds with popular opinion. It’s not acting in its electoral interests – which makes one wonder what interests it’s … serving.”

It’s time for us to remind the Australian government who they are answerable to. Join us to stand up for Julian Assange and Wikileaks, and demand our right to free speech and our right to know.

Speakers include:

Kellie Tranter, lawyer & human rights activist

Jim Casey, Secretary of the NSW Fire Brigade Employees Union

Richard Neville, Founder of Oz Magazine

Irene Doutney, Greens Councillor for the City of Sydney

Jake Lynch, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

Fred Fuentes, Latin American Social Forum

Gail Malone, Peace activist

For more information contact: Anne on 0404 090 710 or Cassie on 0412 355 899.

http://stopwarcoalition.org/rally-for-assange-and-wikileaks/

Submitted by @WikileaksUte

Are you able to donate to the Legals Fund ?

- to assist people with court costs and fines out of their participation in a global movement against the current economic system?

Want the latest Occupy Sydney legal news? Download the Legal Tribune - http://www.scribd.com/doc/97093128

Consider donating to the Legals Fund:
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www.occupysydney.org.au
OS Legal Support on facebook https://www.facebook.com/groups/343057322380372/

Email: legal@occupysydney.org.au

PodCast!

OCCUPY SYDNEY

osydpodcast.org

Occupy Sydney Podcast Episode 2:
Robbery with Violence – resource exploitation series pt 1 of 3

Link to Audio

Submitted by Wenny & Hugo

Before Police Arrive
Tent Monster
After Police Arrive
Occupony
This is all Artwork Created by Occupy Sydney, Occupony is Currently in an Art Gallery in Central Sydney awaiting a Buyer, Tent Monster was Trashed by Police because they have no Artistic Sense and can't stand people being creative and having fun.

Submitted by Liam

July 2012

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
July 30 6.30pm GA MP	July 31			June 29 Occupy Friday	June 30 Occupy Parramatta 5.30pm GA MP	July 1
2 6.30pm GA MP	3	4 6.30pm GA MP	5	6 Occupy Friday	7 Occupy Parramatta Free School 5.30pm GA MP	8
9 6.30pm GA MP	10	11 6.30pm GA MP	12	13 Occupy Friday	14 Occupy Parramatta Free School 5.30pm GA MP	15
16 6.30pm GA MP	17	18 6.30pm GA MP	19 Occupy the Courts	20 Occupy Friday	21 Occupy Parramatta Free School 5.30pm GA MP	22
23 6.30pm GA MP	24	25 6.30pm GA MP	26	27 Occupy the Courts Occupy Friday	28 Occupy Parramatta 5.30pm GA MP	29

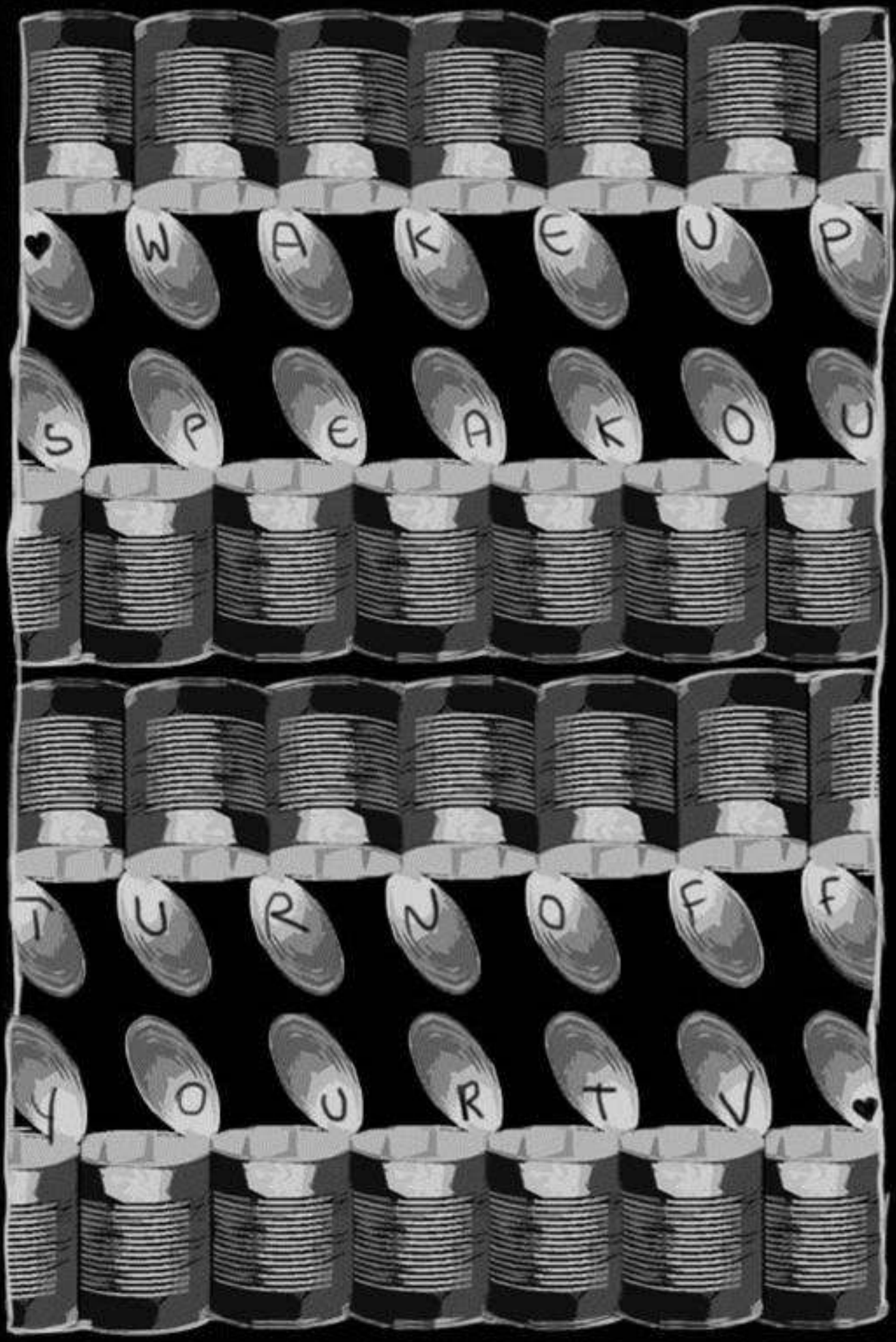

Image by Maloë Cadic